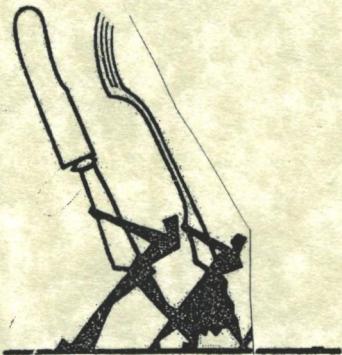# Autism is a Pruning Disorder



Or **Snipping Synapses &
Forking Pathologies**
A Dis on Litman 2025
In Favor of a New ~~&
Obvious~~ Model of ASD

# 1. Excess & Deficit

Prophet of empathy Dr Oliver
Sacks taught me how to think
about the brain-having
person. First, with curiosity
and joy. Then, with a kind of
clarity of scientific
starting point. He was a
pathologist, and he called
a pathology not a deviation,
but a matter of excess and
deficit. This beautiful
simplicity has served me ever
since. In fact, its clarity
is so complete that you can
see right through it and miss
it entirely.
  Dr Sacks saw the person.
Today's aberrance complex
can only see problems.

## 2. The Problems Problem

"Normative" and "medical-ization" are words that have been used to point to the problems problem in pathology and research. And they listen, but then they just see this as (and this is the problem) another problem. It becomes a mist, a cloud called bias. Bias sounds like a failing, causing discomfort and requiring avoidance.

They turn to data. Instead of returning the human to the subject, they remove the scientist from the science.

# 3. Ideas-free Knowledge

Bayesian approaches to data start with guessing. But there are ways to abdicate even this responsibility. Feeding raw data to a model is one. Let it cluster numbers, and boom. You've got pure, distilled science. Didn't even need to make a hypothesis.

There's a "major" new autism study from Princeton. It says they've discovered four types of it. I was excited. Sub-typing is exactly what I've been wanting in an autism study. ASD is wildly varying and contradictory: naming varieties could help.

# 4. Types of types

But **Litman et al** don't find genetic markers that match, e.g, nonverbal autism, allowing us to ask if it's the biological opposite of hyperlexical autism. No. It's not about those kinds of types. **"Heterogeneity in Autism"** groups degrees of severity. Again. We already have that. And it's not helping.

And the data. Source data that speaks in (let's be plain) levels of deviance is not neutral. It fails the two-way insight of Dr Sacks. It merely classifies, and does even that badly.

# 5. ASD as Pruning Disorder

"**The Overpruning Hypothesis of Autism**" (Thos. ea 2016) beats "**Synaptosome Phagocytosis in Macrophages**" (Nishi ea 2025) in title clarity. The latter could be called "The Underpruning Hypothesis." This disagreement spans more studies, too. Why, then, haven't I yet found anyone saying loudly the obvious:"Autism is a pruning disorder."?

Think about it. Maybe the language center was snipped to death in the nonverbal, and neglected into wildness in the hyperlexical.

## 6. Forking & Finesse

Do you see it? This fits the land-of-contrasts inscrutability of ASD's expression. Disinterest versus hyperfocus. Asociability versus limerance. And it happens to fit perfectly with Dr Sacks' two-way maxim, which is starting to feel like it needs a name. **Forking pathologies.** Ooh, that's a fun candidate.

It could do a lot of good. On an ASD diagnosis questionnaire, for example, if it asks Do you have a problem with X? you could say not **It depends** but **Yes, in excess** and **Yes, in deficit**, depending.

Muddle becomes finesse.

Are you autistic?
Consider being a guest host
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